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THE WORKS OF THE AMERICAN ETCHERS.

XXIII.—JOHN AMES MITCHELL.



THE very interesting Exhibition of American Etchings lately held at the Museum of Fine Arts, in Boston, showed a great preponderance of landscape and coast scenery, while architecture and the figure were but scantily represented. Among those who proved the rule by being exceptions, Mr. Mitchell occupied a prominent place. The plates exhibited by him comprised both architecture and figure, which will appear quite natural to those who are acquainted with his course of development. The following list comprises all the etchings he has made up to the present, with the exception of only a few experimental plates:—

Portrait d'une Église à Châteaudun. 1877. From a drawing by Brunet-Debaines, with *staffage* by the etcher. — Size of etched surface: Breadth, $5\frac{7}{8}$ " ; height, $8\frac{7}{8}$ ". Published by Cadart.

Le Nouvel Opéra. 1878. — Size: b. $20\frac{3}{8}$ " ; h. $11\frac{3}{4}$ ". Published by Cadart.

Fugitive Sketches by J. A. Mitchell. 1877. — A set of eight plates of various sizes. Never regularly published.

À Travers l'Exposition, 1878. Dix Croquis à l'Eau-Forte par J. A. Mitchell. — Ten plates in cover, with an additional etching on the cover. Published by the Librairie de l'Art, Paris. 4to.

La Fin de l'Acte. 1878. — Size: b. 7" ; h. 10". Published in *L'Art*.

Three Illustrations to an unpublished story, *The Conquest of America*, written by the artist himself. 1879. One of these plates, *A Young Republican*, is published herewith.

A Political Marriage. From the etcher's own painting. 1880. — Size: b. $8\frac{3}{4}$ " ; h. $11\frac{1}{4}$ ". Not yet published. All of these etchings are signed in full: J. A. Mitchell.

The two plates which head the list have the merit of being pictorial, while at the same time they impress one as architecturally correct, being the work of a trained architect. That these two qualities do not very often go together, it is needless to say; that they are very difficult to attain in the presence of so overpowering a subject as the New Opera is equally apparent. Among the figure subjects the *Political Marriage* is the most important, not alone by reason of its size. It is an excellent rendering of Mr. Mitchell's painting of the same name, which is well enough known by this time not to call for detailed description. *La Fin de l'Acte*, representing the interior of the Opera House, seen from the stage, is, like the preceding plate, a good example of the artist's love for the representation of great floods of light, and his skill in managing them.

The trifles which are gathered together under the collective titles *Fugitive Sketches* and *À Travers l'Exposition* will remind those who care for such things of a funny little drawing by Mr. Mitchell, entitled *The Four Seasons*, photographs of which sold largely in Boston in 1873. A first-cousin of these naked little imps, with the addition of wings to his shoulders, stands on the title-page of the first series, which is an *omnium gatherum* of all sorts,—a pair of lovers sailing in a boat, *The Poor Relative*, an organ-grinder's monkey begging of a rich man seated on his balcony, *In a French Omnibus*, etc. The second set represents incidents at the great French World's Fair, with the ludicrous side always strongly brought into the foreground. In both these sets Mr. Mitchell shows himself a keen observer, quick at detecting the salient points upon which he must depend, and very happy in fixing them upon paper; although it

must be added, that in them, and more especially in the first, he has also shown himself a facile rather than a very painstaking draughtsman. But this lack of academic severity will be readily overlooked by those who can appreciate such a genial, light-hearted talent, which is so different in its mercurial vivacity from our own saturnine sourness as to seem French rather than American.

The plate herewith published,—one of the illustrations of *The Conquest of America*, a sort of patriotic fairy tale,—although not one of the most important of Mr. Mitchell's works, has still several points which are very characteristic. The somewhat exaggerated flood of light which pours in through the stained windows, the pose of the little fellow talking to the king, and his majesty himself, with the sceptre laid aside on the dining-table while taking a meal,—both figures conceived in the true spirit of a tale by Hans Andersen,—give a good hint of his artistic and intellectual inclinations.

Mr. Mitchell was born in New York in 1845, and lived abroad from 1867 to 1870, studying architecture; which profession he practised in Boston until 1876. In that year he again went to Europe, and devoted himself to the study of drawing and painting under Boulanger, Lefebvre, and Albert Maignan, until his return in September, 1880. He is at present settled in New York. His first efforts in etching were made in Boston, but he did not begin the serious practice of the art until 1876, when he received the instruction of Brunet-Dehaines.

S. R. KOEHLER.

UP THE HILL.

ORIGINAL ETCHING BY JAMES D. SMILLIE.



R. SMILLIE appears in the present number in his double capacity of a reproductive and an original etcher, the first being exemplified by his beautiful rendering of Mr. Bridgman's *Lady of Cairo Visiting*, the second by *Up the Hill*, a plate executed in 1879, and before alluded to in the list of the artist's etched work given in the REVIEW for October, 1880. To any one familiar with Mr. Bridgman's methods, the etching from his painting will most vividly recall the original. The difficulties involved in such a reproduction can only be estimated at their true value by those who have given considerable thought to the problems it presents. Not only have the technical peculiarities of the original artist to be kept in view, but the individual characteristics of his color scheme must also be suggested, together with the various hues of the local colors, and their differences in value, as modified by light and shade. And all this over and above the drawing *per se*, which naturally claims a very large share of attention. To triumph over such a complication of problems requires an amount of skill, knowledge, and analytical power which but few artists can bring to the task. It will be instructive to compare with this the first reproductive etching prepared by Mr. Smillie for the REVIEW, the *Landscape with Sheep*, after Jacque, from Mr. Augustus Belmont's collection, which was published in the number for November, 1879. It is much more broadly handled, in accordance with the character of the original, and at once suggests an entirely different scheme of color. The subject represented in *Up the Hill* has also been treated in oil by Mr. Smillie. But the etching differs from the painting in many respects, notably in the season, which is winter in the one, and summer in the other. Dealing with his own ideas, the artist felt himself at liberty to shape them as he pleased, and therefore threw off the fetters which bind the reproductive etcher. *Up the Hill* is an earlier work than either of the plates heretofore published in the REVIEW, and the great advance towards vigor and boldness which Mr. Smillie has since made will be easily recognized when it is held alongside the *Old Cedars*, published last October.

S. R. KOEHLER.